

# Haitian Development: After the Disaster



## READ TO DISCOVER

- What were the conditions in Haiti before the January 2010 earthquake?
- How have the United Nations and other international organizations been involved?
- What are the plans for future development aid in Haiti?

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haiti has struggled to gain its footing as a modern, independent state. Haiti has always suffered from slow to no development due to political issues, a poor economy, and lack of international recognition. Currently, Haiti receives much international attention for its reputation as a “**failed state**.”<sup>1</sup>

In its 200 years as a nation-state, Haiti has not been able to establish a stable government or political system. On top of that, the economy is one of the world’s worst performing. **Infrastructure** throughout the country

is poorly developed and as a result, many people cannot access basic services such as clean water. These problems, among others, have left Haiti the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere and its people in **poverty**. To address this, international organizations including the United Nations have been heavily involved in Haitian development.<sup>2</sup>



Before and after the earthquake, children are most affected by social conditions.

Source: UNDP<sup>2</sup>

## Terms & Concepts

**Failed State:** a nation whose government has very little control and social and political structures have crumbled

**Infrastructure:** system of services, facilities, and institutions provided by the government, such as roads, schools, sanitation, and communications.

**Poverty:** the condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support.

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake shook the capital of Port-au-Prince. With the capital destroyed and the country’s 10 million citizens devastated, much of the pre-earthquake progress suffered huge setbacks.

The earthquake magnified existing conditions, making them impossible to ignore. One year later, the nation and its people are still threatened by government instability, a weak economy, and

numerous social problems. The international community is faced with the task of pulling Haiti from the depths of despair by not simply building back from the earthquake, but by building back even better than it was before the earthquake.

## HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

### POST-COLONIAL HAITI

Haiti was a French colony until January 1, 1804 when a rebellion of African slaves led to independence. Haiti is the only nation to successfully emerge from a slave revolt, and this worried some of their neighbors.<sup>3</sup> The United States refused to recognize Haiti as an independent nation until 1862 because the Southern States were afraid that it may incite a slave rebellion in the United States.<sup>4</sup>



The National Palace collapsed in the earthquake, but the political system was already weak.

Source: UNDP<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the revolution did not lead to stability. Politicians, military leaders, and businessmen have fought for power often.<sup>5</sup> Haiti has

### Terms & Concepts

**Coup d'état:** the forceful overthrow of a government by a group which then takes control of the country.

**Dictator:** a ruler with unrestricted, complete control over the government.

**Human rights:** rights, principles, and freedoms to which all humans are entitled (for example, freedom of speech).

experienced 32 **coup d'états** in its short history. The nation also has had **dictators** who mismanaged the economy and oppressed the people, such as the Duvalier family who ruled the country from 1957 to 1986. Finally, foreign governments have frequently interfered and occupied the nation. For example, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States invaded Haiti on the premise that Haiti was unstable to a quick succession of leaders. The reality was the United States wanted Haiti to comply with US policy. To this day, the United States keeps careful watch that Haiti agrees with the US and repays them in development aid.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1990s, leaders reestablished democracy, but the political system was weak. Ruling officials were often corrupt and stole national money, which should have been used to develop the country.<sup>7</sup> Leaders used violence to control the public, and as a result, citizens' **human rights** were regularly violated. This political atmosphere of instability and violence has trickled down to all parts of Haitian life.

## INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

Throughout the 1990s, there was a rise in international involvement in Haiti. The UN sent several missions to stabilize the fragile government. Similarly, there was a rise in the number of international organizations and UN programs, including operating in Haiti for humanitarian purposes.

The 2004 coup d'état forced then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from government. Haiti briefly entered a time of crisis before the UN Security Council sent in a **peacekeeping** force: the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). MINUSTAH ensured security during the return to democracy with 2006's election of René Préval. The mission works to restore peace and stability by protecting human rights, supporting government policies, and training the Haitian National Police.

### Potential for Positive Change

By 2009, many experts were optimistic about long-term Haitian development.<sup>8</sup> The United Nations appointed former United States President Bill Clinton as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Haiti. The **Inter-American Development Bank** helped raise \$770 million in **aid**.<sup>9</sup> Elections were planned for February 2010.

## JANUARY 2010 - THE EARTHQUAKE

On January 12, 2010, a powerful earthquake struck near the capital city of Port-au-Prince, the home to 3.5 million people. In total, 222,570 were killed, 300,000 were injured, and more than 1 million were left homeless.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the tragic loss of life, there were terrible effects on infrastructure. Port-au-Prince was flattened. Hospitals collapsed; those still standing accepted overwhelming numbers. Roads were blocked, the airport control tower was damaged, and communication lines were broken. All the strides Haiti had made towards development were wiped out and Haiti was left to start from scratch.

## Terms & Concepts

**Peacekeeping:** UN activity of volunteers and troops entering a nation to build or maintain peace.  
**Inter-American Development Bank:** international organization which supports Latin American and Caribbean states' economic and social development by lending to governments.  
**Aid:** money or materials given to a country in need.



Thousands of earthquake survivors flocked to ferries docked at port for food and medical supplies.

Source: Candice Villareal<sup>11</sup>

## DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

### THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

#### Haiti's People

Haitians who survived the earthquake searched for missing family, for medical care, and for housing. 200,000 homes were damaged beyond repair. With **aftershocks** continuing for weeks, safe housing was rare. Many Haitians chose to sleep in tents or in the streets. Others fled to neighboring villages and towns, or to their neighbor, the Dominican Republic, who accepted thousands of people fleeing across the border.<sup>11</sup>

Terms & Concepts

**Aftershocks:** smaller earthquakes which follow the larger, main quake.



A map of Haiti showing where the January 2010 earthquake struck.  
Source: CIA World Factbook<sup>1</sup>

#### Blows to an Effective Response

The devastation to people and infrastructure impacted the speed of the international response. International organizations working in Haiti lost staff, buildings, and communication. Meanwhile, government institutions, already ineffective, could not respond quickly. Offices were destroyed. Much of the country's leadership died, and remaining officials were dealing with family deaths and property damage.

#### ONE YEAR LATER

Peace, stability, and development are tied together. The progress and hope surrounding the development which existed in 2009 now faces new setbacks and new obstacles. After a year of work by Haitian and international organizations, the situation in Haiti remains critical.<sup>12</sup>

"The urgency of the moment naturally dominates our planning. But...we must be thinking about tomorrow.... We must help Haiti **build back better**, working with the government so that today's investments have lasting benefit, creating jobs and freeing Haitians from dependence on the world's generosity."

- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, January 2010<sup>12</sup>

#### Political Conditions

A source of corruption, violence, and inefficiency since independence, Haiti's politicians are not trusted by the people. The earthquake raised new concerns about the strength of the political system to deal with the overwhelming problems. Aid distribution officials have been accused of accepting money from gangs rather than fairly dividing food and housing supplies.<sup>13</sup>

Following the earthquake, elections scheduled for February 2010 were postponed until November 28, 2010. Although a new round of legislators was elected, the presidential elections were postponed again for a runoff election held January 16, 2011 since no candidate received over fifty percent of the vote.<sup>14</sup> The new government will face many challenges while rebuilding the country, including



ending political corruption. If successful, a future government could restore the faith of the Haitian people and of the global community.

## Economic Conditions

Political instability has affected the economy. Money is controlled by a small group of very wealthy

### Terms & Concepts

**Foreign investment:** the process of foreign companies and nationals using money or supplies to set up their businesses in another country; often leads to a build up of infrastructure and employment of locals to supply the business.

people. The rest of the country lives in poverty. The UN Development Programme estimates that 78% of Haitians live on less than \$2 per day.<sup>15</sup> Many Haitians are unable to find work, and this leads some to join gangs or enter the drug trade.

Prior to the earthquake, international financial organizations were creating programs to encourage economic growth in Haiti. **Foreign investment** could produce long-term development. The Haitian government was developing their tourism strategy to attract foreign

shoppers who would buy local goods and help stimulate the economy.<sup>16</sup>

### Top Priorities for Rebuilding<sup>14</sup>

#### Short-Term Assistance:

- Safe shelter
- Food and clean water
- Sanitation system
- Security (especially for women and children)

#### Long-Term Reconstruction:

- Infrastructure
- Democratic government
- Women's rights
- Investment spread throughout Haiti in cities and countryside



Earthquake survivors wait in line for food.

Source: UN Photo/Logan Abassi<sup>15</sup>

However, the earthquake changed the focus from long-term development to immediate needs. Some factories which were shut down are still closed. Other workplaces were completely destroyed. Unemployment has increased since businesses were destroyed, and currently 2/3 of the population is not employed.<sup>17</sup> There has been a huge international response of donations and aid, but more is necessary.

## Humanitarian Conditions

There are an overwhelming number of social problems attached to this poverty. Infectious diseases are widespread. Opportunities in education are limited, especially for women. Crime is common and the security

forces are ill-prepared to deal with gangs. With an inefficient and corrupt political system, Haitians must rely on international organizations, such as Partners in Health, to provide public services such as health care.<sup>18</sup> The terrible humanitarian conditions before the earthquake were magnified in the aftermath. In January 2010, the poorest Haitians who struggled for survival before the earthquake

were the least able to help themselves.

### Cité Soleil: Dire Conditions in a Haitian Shanty Town

Haiti's problems are most visible in the slums of Cité Soleil. The area is called a *shanty town* because its houses are made from scrap materials, like plastic. There is no sanitation, no electricity, and minimal schools and hospitals. It is home to 300,000 people, but has almost no government or police influence. Instead, Cité Soleil is controlled by gangs. This shanty town has a reputation as one of the most dangerous places in the world. Security concerns stop many international organizations from entering Cité Soleil.



Child walks through trash in Cité Soleil.

Source: CyberAnth<sup>6</sup>

#### Terms & Concepts

**Scarce:**  
very little;  
not  
enough.

Disease increased with physical injury as well as **scarce** food and water. Medical organizations struggle to stretch a limited number of supplies and proper facilities to handle the increase in patients.<sup>19</sup>

Security is a major problem. Haitians and international volunteers created “tent cities.” The tents were meant to provide *temporary* housing. Months later, the tents remain.<sup>20</sup> Many of the tent cities have no sanitation, no electricity, and little police security. This leaves many women and children especially vulnerable to violence. Schools and school resources are limited.

### Education

Along with the lack of schools, Haiti's educational system is suffering from brain drain, a phenomena where educated professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, professors, etc., leave their home country in order to find work in another country. The political instability, poor investment in the economy, and extreme poverty has pushed many educated Haitians to leave, where they cannot find jobs, for other countries where there are more job opportunities. But, with most of the educated Haitians leaving Haiti, there are not enough educated people to be doctors or teach the next generation of Haitians. It becomes a vicious cycle that will only be fixed if the economy is developed and becomes stronger so there are more jobs for educate Haitians.<sup>21</sup>



The first Port-au-Prince building constructed after the earthquake was this orphanage.

Source: Agência Brasil<sup>19</sup>

## ACTORS WORKING TO REBUILD HAITI

### Neighboring Nation-States

Many groups have a strong interest in Haiti, and neighboring countries demonstrated their commitment by offering **sanctuary** to Haitians. People who leave Haiti to escape the terrible conditions go to other Caribbean islands, Canada, the United States, and Europe. The result is that 1-2 million Haitians live outside of Haiti today.<sup>22</sup>

### Non-Governmental Organizations

**Non-governmental organizations** (NGOs) are the primary channels through which aid enters Haiti. This aid can take the form of providing money or supplies, bringing in doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, building houses, and a number of other activities. After the earthquake, NGOs raised millions of dollars from donations around the world.

There are more than 10,000 NGOs operating in Haiti. Some of the most well-known are: the International Committee of the Red Cross which specializes in emergency response, Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) and Partners in Health, which provide medical care, and MADRE, a women's rights group. There are also a large number of local, Haitian NGOs active in the rebuilding process.<sup>23</sup>

### The United Nations

Following the earthquake, the UN coordinated thousands of humanitarian response groups. To do this, they organized groups into different types, or "clusters", of response—such as, food aid, health, shelter, etc. Ban Ki-moon's strategy to "build back better" has become the motto of the collective effort of the UN bodies. Major programs in Haiti include the *World Food Programme* (WFP), the *Children's Fund* (UNICEF), and the *Development Programme* (UNDP).

"We complain because the government is not able to [lead], but we are partly responsible for that."

- Edmond Mulet, 2010<sup>24</sup>

One WFP program has set up feeding centers for mothers and children who do not have access to healthy food.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, UNICEF reopens and rebuilds schools.<sup>25</sup> School supplies were donated from around the world and 3,000 tents were set up for education. The UNDP has created programs to give Haitians jobs, such as clearing trash and repairing roads.<sup>26</sup> These programs have the dual purpose of improving infrastructure and decreasing unemployment.

### Terms & Concepts

**Sanctuary:** a safe place to live.

**Non-governmental organization:** group which is not connected to a government; often works toward a specific cause.

## THE PROBLEM WITH INTERNATIONAL AID

Unfortunately, despite the success stories, there are growing concerns that there are too many NGOs in Haiti. Coordination between the 10,000 NGOs is difficult. Some areas of Haiti receive tremendous attention; others (such as slums of Cité Soleil) are almost completely overlooked. In October 2010, Refugees International published a report stating that Haitian people (particularly in the tent cities) continue to suffer in a state of emergency with limited resources and little security.<sup>27</sup>



**Sustainable:**  
capable of being  
maintained at a  
steady level.

They attribute this to poor leadership, problems with camp management, lack of communication between NGOs and Haitian civilians, and the concentration of problems in Port-au-Prince.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, because the international community has taken on many responsibilities normally carried out by governments, the Haitian government has a limited role in running the country and is mostly dependent on outsiders. In part, this stems from lack of trust over the memory of historical corruption. However, Edmond Mulet, the Interim Head of MINUSTAH, believes that Haiti's development can be **sustainable** only with a stable political and legal system.<sup>29</sup>

## PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

### UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION MISSION IN HAITI - MINUSTAH

Following 2004's coup d'état, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) with *Resolution 1542*. MINUSTAH is a peacekeeping operation mandated to retain stability in Haiti.

The earthquake caused the collapse and destruction of MINUSTAH headquarters and the loss of many of its staff. *Resolution 1908* increased the number of MINUSTAH troops immediately following the earthquake to help coordinate emergency relief efforts.<sup>30</sup>

Following recommendations of the UN Secretary-General,<sup>31</sup> *Resolution 1927* and *Resolution 1944* have further increased MINUSTAH to a total of 8,940 military personnel and 4,391 police officers in addition to the local and civilian staff. MINUSTAH forces fill in many of the security gaps found at food distribution centers and in prisons.



MINUSTAH peacekeeper from Jordan feeds Haitian child in 2008.  
Source: UN Photo/Marco Dormino<sup>26</sup>

### SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HAITI

In 2009, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon established the position of Special Envoy for Haiti and appointed former United States President Bill Clinton. Unfortunately, the office suffered a setback



when the earthquake struck in early 2010. The Special Envoy works with the Haitian government, international donors, foreign companies, and NGOs to “build back better.”

## INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

International financial organizations have added to previous pledges of development aid. The *Inter-American Development Bank* (IDB) has pledged \$2.2 billion to be used over the next ten years. IDB also cancelled any existing debts of Haiti to ease the economic burden on the country.<sup>32</sup> The *World Bank* has also provided a great number of interest-free grants to the Haitian people.

## THE HAITIAN RECONSTRUCTION FUND (HRF)

The Haitian government and the international community have partnered to create the Haiti Reconstruction Fund. The fund determines how financial donations can be coordinated to address “high-priority projects.” All decisions must be approved by the *Interim Haiti Recovery Commission* which has developed an “Action Plan for the Recovery and Development of Haiti.”

## RECOMMENDATION FOR FORMULATING A RESOLUTION

The nation of Haiti, its people and government, face many serious concerns. Aid organizations, both NGOs and UN programs, have a difficult time identifying which problems to address first. With no end in sight, it is not entirely clear what the objective should be for the UN.

There are many risks caused by current political, economic, and social conditions, as well as the additional threat of natural disasters. History has shown that government instability and corruption increases the number of social and humanitarian problems facing the people. Moreover, Haiti’s problems can affect neighboring countries. How can the United Nations break this cycle?

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What relationship does your country have with Haiti?
- What sort of national response did your government have to the earthquake?
- Is your government or your nationals involved in programs taking place in Haiti?
- How does your country compare to the situation in Haiti in terms of politics, economics, and humanitarian concerns?
- Has your country ever been affected by natural disaster?

## BLOC POSITIONS

### EUROPE AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES

Much of the aid to Haiti comes from the Western countries. They also supply volunteers and military troops to MINUSTAH. Significant numbers of Haitian immigrants living in these countries can influence their government’s foreign policy towards Haiti.



## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Geographically, Haiti is a part of Latin America and the Caribbean. Many of these countries have contributed aid, volunteers, and soldiers. Neighboring islands are particularly concerned with preventing possible instability from spreading beyond Haiti.

## ASIA

In recent years, several nations in Asia have faced similar natural disasters to the Haitian earthquake (i.e. the 2004 tsunami). The UN took many lessons from these events as they responded to the earthquake. Haiti has served as a wake-up call for the need of greater disaster preparedness.

## AFRICA

In terms of political, economic, and humanitarian conditions, Haiti resembles several countries in Africa more closely than within its own region. Successes and failures of the UN in dealing with Haiti may offer lessons for similar peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in African nations.

## RESEARCH SITES

### MAJOR NEWS SECTIONS:

Nearly all of major news companies have developed sections of their websites for the Haitian disaster and the aftermath. Check out these sites for news articles, maps, photographs, and videos:

- BBC: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/americas/2010/haiti\\_earthquake/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/americas/2010/haiti_earthquake/default.stm)
- The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/haiti>
- CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2010/haiti.quake/>
- Miami Herald: <http://www.miamiherald.com/haiti/>

### UN NEWS CENTRE:

Check out this site for transcripts of UN meetings and for up to the minute UN news on your country:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=91&Body=Haiti&Body1=>

### THE INTERIM HAITI RECOVERY COMMISSION

The national government is addressing the disaster is with the *Interim Haiti Recovery Commission*, led by co-chairs Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and President Bill Clinton. Check out some of the projects they are organizing:

<http://www.cirh.ht/index.jsp?sid=1&id=1&pid=1>

### GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF HAITI:

This site is devoted to the comprehensive rebuilding of Haiti. Check here for issues and updates about infrastructure and social issues:

<http://www.refondation.ht/index.jsp?sid=1&id=1&pid=1&lng=en>

## CITATIONS AND PHOTO CREDITS

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